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562 woman was sometimes shot accidentally in a man's stead in spite of
*628 the tabu. In that unhappy event in Kurbin a woman in the
672 murderer's family might be killed in return. If, too, a feud was
784 unusually bitter, as was, for instance, the Kaloshi family one in Dibër, all barriers of law and disgrace were thrown down; 'kill at all costs' was the order of the day, and in its execution women and children were as likely as men to suffer.

This tabu on killing women had several sources. In the first place, a woman was 'a sack for carrying' things, i.e. she was the vehicle by which a family was carried on, and killing her might mean the loss of more than one man to her husband's family. Then she carried no arms, and therefore was classed with old men, children, and lunatics as safe from an avenger. Again, she was
[421] always regarded as an article of property, belonging in her maiden days to her father and afterwards to her husband; her father had the right to her work till she married, and her husband afterwards; in token of this work her father sold her dear, and her husband bought her dear. Articles of property could not be damaged in the course of blood feuds. There was also the feeling that it was a disgrace for a 'strong' man to kill anything so inferior as a woman.

The tabu on killing women was so strong that when one committed a murder, not she but one of the males in the family expiated the crime, if expiation were possible. Murders by women fell into two categories, the first outside and the second inside the family. In both cases the murderess might commit the crime on her own account or butt into a men's quarrel to avenge a murdered relative.

*628 One more class of expiator remains to be considered. It some-
672 times happened that a man hired an outsider to kill his enemy. In
[754] the Breg i Matit some held that such a man was a 'witch', and
676 since witches could not have blood feuds, he must go scot-free and his hireling suffer, like any other murderer. In most places, if the instigator could not be discovered, or if time was passing without vengeance being taken on him, the hireling was killed. These practices were exceptional, and in general the feud was credited to the principal rather than to the subordinate who fired the fatal shot.

[554] Vanity as well as justice came into the question, for the instigator was usually a more important person than his instrument, and killing him brought the avenger more glory.